

THE LOSS OF COMRADESHIP

Exclusivism or elitism in modern day America is almost as serious a problem as was the class system of early England. This elitism begins to show its ugly head when persons or groups begin to feel that they are somehow superior intellectually, economically, or religiously to others. It is then taught subtly to children, subordinates, or people who allow someone else to do their thinking for them. On a practical level we see this when young children begin to take on the attitudes of older, stronger children in order to be accepted into the group. One mother put it this way with her children, "I told my children-- "you aren't any better than those children you are running with. I just don't want you branded with the same iron they have been branded with." It occurs when groups develop a kind of aloofness because of a perceived superior religiosity.

Out of this philosophy come gangs, cults, and cliques who put forth their thinking as the only correct thinking. One of the saddest by-products of this kind of thinking is the loss of comradeship. What this does is destroy a sense of working together to accomplish a common goal in spite of differences in opinion or philosophy. The sense that we are all in this together is lost and hurtful divisions develop. It removes trust, support, and cooperation. I have watched this happen in churches where I have pastored, in communities, where I have lived, in schools where I have been a student and in entire denominations where I have served.

I am glad that the teachings of my early years have stayed with me my entire life. I was fervently taught that I am no better than anyone else, that what a person possesses does not constitute real character. My grandmother said it this way: "What you have doesn't make you what you are." The color of a person's skin or their physical appearance or their church affiliation or their cultural heritage is not a reflection of that person's value and merit, and there are many rooms in my Father's House.